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Rep. Zepnick Calls for Legislative Action on I-94 Corridor Construction

Madison, WI – Today, State Representative Josh Zepnick (D-Milwaukee) issued a statement urging the Wisconsin Legislature to enumerate the I-94 East/West Project in order to move the planning process forward while legitimate neighborhood, transit, and public safety issues continue to get ironed out at the local level:

“As a resident of the Silver City neighborhood and legislator from Milwaukee’s South Side 9th Assembly District, including the Menomonee Valley, my district sees the greatest impact from rebuilding the I-94 corridor between State Fair Park and the Marquette Interchange. While the original plan of WisDOT was excessive in its footprint and an unnecessary cost to the taxpayer, the route is a critical piece of the Milwaukee transportation network. It directly affects my district at the Miller Parkway, S. 35th, S. 27th and S. 16th ramp exits and entrances, and must be addressed” said Zepnick.

“Those familiar with the Stadium Interchange know it is out of sync with real-world driving patterns and must be massively redesigned. The northbound entrance to I-94 and access to I-41 is dizzying and unsafe. As such, accessing the Interstate and the important east-west Canal Street is difficult, causing an under-capacity traffic situation as a result of problems getting on and off these roads.”

“There are serious consequences of doing nothing on I-94. If the project is delayed two years, the need for tax dollars to fix the corridor will grow by millions, with current estimates projecting a \$44 million increase in budget. In addition, businesses, hospitals, and homes around this area are dependent on solid infrastructure in this interchange. For example, the Veterans Administration and Hospital relies on I-94 to provide predictable and safe access to veterans, military patients, and volunteers, with over 1 million visits per year. Their cooperative arrangement with the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center, which lies north of the Zoo interchange, requires constant emergency, patient, and employee travel between the facilities. The current congestion and unsafe roads have caused delayed travel and potential for injury.”

“When Miller Park was first designed, there was little thought given to the southern access points or the current growth of the Menomonee Valley. As someone who helped fund the Hank Aaron State Trail, I am amazed at the successful work of the Menomonee Valley Partners and the City of Milwaukee. I have been a longtime legislator and nearby neighbor, and I know Milwaukee’s South side needs to have an improved connection to Miller Park and to the Menomonee Valley. There also need

for improvements on how the I-94 corridor cuts through the neighborhoods in my district and interconnect with public transit. Some examples that have come to my attention over the years include:

- Creating a smoother, safer access route to eastbound Canal Street when traveling north from Miller Parkway onto I-94
- Better access for pedestrians and bicyclists going to Miller Park events from east/south, using either Canal Street or the Hank Aaron State Trail
- There should be two northbound lanes extending north and south of National Avenue to make City of Milwaukee traffic move more safely when getting onto or off I-94 and during Miller Park events
- The twisted knot of S. 27th access to I-94 has long been a safety hazard and causes confusion
- Neighborhoods to the South of the Valley need better access from the City street grid, which needs to be taken into account when designing the I-94 ramps going forward
- Excessive speeding on the S. 35, S. 27 and S. 16th viaducts causes severe problems to my district's business and residential neighborhoods
- There are several schools along S. 35th street and Layton Boulevard, activity from the Mitchell Park domes, and residential areas which require heavy pedestrian activity. This project absolutely must take into account the long overdue redesign of these viaduct bridges and the heavy traffic that impacts the National Avenue and Greenfield Avenue intersections at S. 35th, S. 27th and S. 16th Streets

The overall goals of construction must be: reduced speeding, safer pedestrian and biking routes, and examination of transit only lanes to calm fast-moving traffic that is entering/exiting the Interstate system.”

“I am therefore calling on the Legislature to enumerate the project as the state considers the broader issue of alternatives for long-term funding during the next biennial budget period. **Importantly, this step requires no spending nor commitment of additional dollars in the current biennium.** In fact, acting to make this project a priority now will assuredly save tax dollars by potentially avoiding costly future delays.”

Rep. Zepnick lives on Milwaukee's south side and has represented the 9th Assembly District since 2003. He is ranking member on the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities.

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